

AS IT HAPPENS

WHY OUR GIRLS SWIM TO THE TOP

Why have women done so well at swimming in recent years? The Amateur Swimming Association tell us that British women have been taking part in competitive swimming since 1869, when the association was founded. But it is only in the past 10 years that they have thoroughly eclipsed the men by their efforts on the international front, so that today Britain is considered a world class swimming nation for her women, but not for her men.

No one knows why the girls do better. Physical explanations that leap to mind, such as the theory that little girls take to the water four times as easily as boys and are able to stay in longer without turning blue, apparently do not have much bearing on champion swimmers. An A.S.A. committee on anatomy and physiology for swimming has studied the question from the medical side and found no physiological explanation. In many other countries, they say, men swimmers come out on top.

—early teenage starters

"The girls are more dedicated and spend more time on their training", the man from the association told us, pointing an obvious moral. The multiplication of their successes over the past decade in particular is more easily explained. Increased training facilities throughout the country, coupled with the A.S.A.'s nationwide "learn to swim" campaign, have resulted in British

children taking to water in much greater numbers and much younger. So, each year there are more potential champions to choose from. For girl swimmers this is extra important, as they seem to do best between the ages of 13 and 18 and, then, to fade, as Viola put it "even when they to perfection grow"—unlike male champions, who often go on until they are 25. An exception is Britain's Linda Ludgrove, now 18 and competing in Jamaica. She began breaking world records at 15—as she is in the picture above—and

Cremation and Mr. Callaghan

It seems that weighting the scales against private enterprise is being carried on to the last threshold of life. Mr. G. A. Noble, President of a Crematoria Association, complains to us that proprietary crematoria and cemeteries will pay S.E.T. in full, while municipal authorities are to get the refund. Representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer have, he regrets, received an "identical and unsatisfactory reply". He wants to know what has happened to Mr. Callaghan's policy of putting public departments on all fours with the private concerns against which they compete.

Break up of the Houses—

When Mr. Heath came down from the Board of Trade on March 4, 1964, to announce the decision to move the August Bank holiday from the beginning to the end of the month, no backbencher had the foresight to protest that the House would be putting a rod in pickle for its own back. Many backbenchers today are wishing they had. Here they are in the second week of August, still sitting, and in the thick of the fight. The old Bank holiday used to make a natural buffer to stop the Executive in their stride. Now, backbenchers mournfully see, Leaders of the House will always be tempted to carry on well into August to tidy up Government business; and always there will be a few backbenchers pressing the Leader to keep sitting until all the arrears of debates have been made good.

—wives up in arms

Already the House begins to look thinly garrisoned, especially on the Opposition side, and when the Bill is dispatched to the Lords tonight the exodus will gather pace. For many parliamentary wives are up in arms that half the school holidays should have gone by before the head of the family is liberated to take his share of responsibility. At least some M.P.s are mutinously muttering that the Whips can do their worst—but they are not staying at Westminster one minute longer than necessary after tonight's division.

Mr. Bowden, the Leader of the House, assures his friends that, next year, it will be better. Putting to use the unusually long 18-month session, Government business will be neatly spaced so that there can again be a rising for the recess at the end of July—Bank holiday or no. But no experienced backbencher believes it. July, as Nye Bevan used to say, is a terrible month in which the world, or something, always goes mad. A year from now there will be a crisis of some kind, and Parliament will be sitting to cope with it. Mr. Heath's jiggery-pokery with the Bank holiday breached the dam, and nobody will ever be able to repair it.

The doctor stung—

Having once practically passed out following a wasp sting, our medical correspondent tells us he has something of a vested interest in the subject. Like so many of the minor maladies of life, doctors evince little interest in the subject and a good first-aid or sage countryman probably knows

more about them than many a doctor. The one consoling aspect of this medical lack of interest is, he says, that it indicates that bee or wasp stings seldom have any serious effects. A fatal outcome such as that reported yesterday is extremely rare and practically always means that the unfortunate victim was hypersensitive to the sting. The incidence of lesser degrees of hypersensitivity is not known but their management is relatively easy—and successful. Desensitization injections are available.

—first aid kit

In dealing with bee stings, one of the most important things to remember is, our medicine man says, that, because of its barbed nature, a bee leaves its stinging mechanism behind it—and, thus mutilated, soon dies. The wasps' stinging lancets on the other hand are not barbed and so it can withdraw its sting without any difficulty. The practical implication of this is that the first thing to do to bee stings is to remove the stinging mechanism with care—otherwise more of the venom may be expelled into the wretched victim. Traditionally, the subsequent treatment of an ordinary sting consists of the application of ammonia, bicarbonate of soda, or washing blue in the case of a bee sting, and vinegar or lemon juice in the case of wasp sting. The experts say that there is no basis for this and that the application of a so-called antihistamine ointment is what is indicated. To which his reaction is: But not all holidaymakers have the sense to take an antihistamine ointment in their luggage.

Double duty

Sir Lionel Luckhoo, the High Commissioner for Guyana, is likely to combine also that office with the High Commissionership of Barbados when it becomes independent at the end of November. Mr. Barrow, the Prime Minister of Barbados, is in favour of this joint representation, and Mr. Forbes Burnham, Prime Minister of Guyana, is understood to concur. Sir Lionel is well-informed on Caribbean, British, and Afro-Asian affairs, and has a wider range of British political acquaintance than most Commonwealth diplomatists from smaller countries. He also believes in personally pushing home products. As everyone who had dined with him knows, he is an adept at cooking rice and he also knows how to make highly palatable the Barbados staple—the yam. If he does the double duty he will not only be setting an interesting precedent for the smaller and less wealthy countries, he will be adding plenty of work to his own desk. Barbados has over 60,000 settlers and 3,000 students in Britain.

Polyglot Mayfair

These are the days for stalking visitors in the West End in the hopes of a record bag of languages. One sportsman, yesterday, in an hour's prowling, zigzagging in and out of shops, heard spoken six varieties of English (American, Scottish, Irish, North Country, cockney, and B.B.C.). The foreigners gave him French, German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic (or it may have been Turkish, he admits to not knowing the difference), Japanese (or some other Far Eastern tongue), and a stranger to him which he guesses, without much confidence, may have been Rumanian.



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The Times (London, England), Wednesday, Aug 10, 1966; pg. 9; Issue 56706. (1379 words)

Category: News

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Gale Document Number:CS152922890